

Lee Nickles
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Discernment of the Average American

Project Motivation

Overall, Americans are not a terribly discerning bunch. School standardized scores are not performing well against the rest of the industrialized world, logic courses have been removed from the curriculum, deaths frequently occur on city roadways due to unwise decisions, and the evidence goes on.

We must determine a measure for discernment for Americans to: 1) indicate and measure the current problem, 2) measure trends in discernment over time, and 3) show the effect of any interventions.

One of the intuitive indicators of a lack of discernment is the number of sensational “newspapers” sold in American supermarket check-out lines purporting to report the current activities of extra-terrestrials, whereabouts of Elvis, deaths (and illnesses, and affairs, and illegitimate children, and surgeries, etc.) of celebrities, and the latest prediction for the end of the world. This is obviously hogwash and anyone purchasing these shows a lack of discernment that is so great, it is incapable of being measured directly. However, if the sales of these “newspapers” (referred to as “rags” in the United Kingdom) are taken all together, they may indicate an average discernment level for all Americans. This is just the measurement we’re looking for.

Objective

The objective of this research project is to validate the measurement of average sales of sensationalistic “newspapers” at American supermarket check-out lines to indicate average discernment of Americans.

Contributions

The contributions of this research are intuitively obvious and are left as an exercise to the reader.